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President:	Mr. de MARCO	(Malta)
later:	Mr. AWOONOR (Vice-President)	(Ghana)

- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35]

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 35

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/45/595, A/45/709, A/45/726)

The PRESIDENT: I propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 5 p.m. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I therefore request those representatives who wish to participate in the debate to put their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. SALAH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): Once again we return this year to consider a chronic problem that has become a fixture on the agenda of the Assembly, namely, the question of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core, the question of Palestine. Once again we come back to regurgitate our words on this problem, which has been awaiting solution for over 40 years in a state of stasis, the only movement being the rise and fall in its temperature and the degree of interest taken in it.

In the course of that period four major wars have broken out in the Middle East, in addition to hundreds of clashes on various fronts. Each conflagration has been followed by some sort of international movement in search of a solution to one aspect or other of this problem. Then the momentum peters out until a new explosion takes its place.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Is it not time after all of this for this question to be dealt with resolutely with a view to attaining a comprehensive and just peace? Is it not high time that this question should move from the agenda of the Assembly into another international framework in which a sustained and serious endeavour would be made with a view to arriving at a comprehensive solution? Must the world witness another explosion before it takes action? Is it not necessary to embark on a sincere and urgent search for the peace that would bring the region to this desired goal?

Recently, the world has begun to hear a new tune that seems to herald the emergence of a new international order. This gives cause for hope that a more secure and peaceful world will emerge, wherein it will be possible to find peaceful solutions to the existing international problems and to address each new problem that arises, in a new spirit.

The recent statements we have been hearing in the Security Council and all the talk we hear in the corridors of the international Organization have given us a new sense of optimism that the new order has finally arrived and will embrace the Arab-Israeli conflict, thus moving it towards the solution that we have sought for so long a time.

In consonance with the spirit of this new order, I wish to focus in my statement not on the developments of the question, nor on the historical, political and economic circumstances that surrounded it, but on the redefinition of the points at which the peace efforts have become stalled, in the hope that the world may find an opportunity to move forward again. I do not wish to stop at what has happened, but rather to spell out the facts of the matter so that we may envisage what may happen and what really should occur.

READEX FICHE

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Jordan has constantly called for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, at the core of which is the question of Palestine - a solution in which all the parties to the conflict may participate since they will participate in reaping its benefits. My country has lived with this cause alongside the Palestinian people since the very beginning. We have suffered - and continue to suffer - the agonies that have ensued. We have spared no effort in trying to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict. We have responded to every initiative, and went along with every endeavour that aimed at reaching that goal, because we are convinced, as was stated by His Majesty King Hussein, that wars in our region have never led to victories or to gains; but to the burial of all illusions and to the sowing of the seeds of new wars.

The international community is convinced that the basis for the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict lies in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and that the appropriate framework for the realization of this solution is an international conference that would be convened on that basis.

The region's pending problems and issues are innumerable and intertwined. There is no way that they can be settled except within the wide framework that would be provided by such a conference under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation of all the parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and the five permanent members of the Security Council, so that those countries may use their good offices in resolving the disputes and thus provide the necessary guarantees for the peace that would ensue.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

On our part, we believe that the conference should lead to the following:

First: the complete withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the city of Al-Quds;

Secondly: the exercise by the Palestinian people of their legitimate national rights, including the right of self-determination and the right to establish their own independent State on their national soil;

Thirdly: the resolution of the problem of the Palestinian refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III);

Fourthly: the establishment of international guarantees for the security of all the countries of the region.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Needless to say, if these objectives are attained, a new climate will prevail in the region that may be conducive to co-operation between the countries of the region in economic development as well as in other areas. It would also make it possible for the countries of the region to arrive at appropriate solutions between themselves, to the problem of water resources. They can agree also to remove from the region all the nuclear, chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction and achieve overall arms reduction. This will make it possible to channel the region's resources to development programmes and thus ensure a better future for the coming generations.

This is not the position of my country alone, but of all Arabs. It is a position that was adopted by the Arab Summit Conference of Fez in 1982, and was reaffirmed by subsequent Arab summit conferences.

The Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular are convinced of the need to coexist with the new world realities. The decisions of the Palestine National Council that were adopted in Algeria in November of 1988, have expressed this most clearly. Is it not time for Israel to do the same? Is it not time for Israel to rid itself of its illusion and its recalcitrant positions?

The United States Secretary of State, Mr. James Baker, called on Israel last year to abandon its dream of establishing the "greater Israel". The day before yesterday we listened to the representative of the Soviet Union in the Security Council as he called on the Government of Israel to abandon its obstructionist policy and to change its posture so that it may become consonant with the realities of the new order which is beginning to prevail in the world.

We hear the same appeals and advice profferred to Israel every day from every country including Israel's friends. Nevertheless, Israel continues to procrastinate and to divert attention from two basic facts:

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

First, the fact that it is the Palestinian people that is suffering under the yoke of a military occupation which is totally rejected, and that it resists in order to rid itself of that occupation and exercise self-determination. The blessed intifadah of this people, which enters today its fourth year, clearly expresses this reality.

Secondly, the fact that it is Israel that is the occupying State which in all its practices and conduct reflects the conduct of any other occupying State in the way of repression and terrorism. Whatever arguments and pretexts Israel may use in defence of its occupation and its inhuman practices, it shall never succeed in convincing the world, nor will it even convince its people to the contrary.

Throughout the years, Israel has striven to complicate the problem rather than to work for a solution. It has annexed Arab Al-Quds, and claimed that it is its capital. It has annexed the Syrian Arab Golan Heights. It has established settlements in the occupied territories. It has attacked a number of other Arab countries, especially Lebanon, the southern part of which it continues to hang on to in violation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

We wonder: is it not high time for the countries which are friends of Israel, those who give it every form of assistance, to give Israel advice and to exercise pressure on it so that it may change its current posture and respond to the international will and seek peace? The Palestinians, as represented by their legitimate leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization, have demonstrated moral and political courage when they explicitly declared their acceptance to live in peace in their own State, alongside the State of Israel, on the land of

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Palestine. All the Arabs have found the political and moral courage to declare their readiness to seek a just peace for all the countries of the region with all that that may entail in the way of mutual concessions from all. The question is, when will the leaders of Israel find the same courage and accept the new world realities?

Israel must decide whether it wishes to remain as an alien body in the region or to become a responsive party alongside all the other parties in the region.

Mr. BENSID (Algeria) (interpretation from French): I have the honour to make the following statement on the situation in the Middle East on behalf of the delegations of the member States of the Union of the Arab Maghreb: the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Republic of Tunisia, the Kingdom of Morocco and Algeria.

The General Assembly is beginning another debate on the situation in the Middle East at a time when international relations are experiencing unprecedented change, thanks to the end of the cold war and the beginning of a lasting détente. This is reflected in disarmament agreements, the relaxation of tension, the settlement of certain regional conflicts, and even an increased use of the potential and mechanisms of the United Nations, whose authority and credibility have been enhanced.

(Mr. Bensid, Algeria)

Because of that new spirit, all regions of the world seem to be embarking on the road to peace and stability, and they are rapidly enjoying the benefits - all regions of the world except for one, the Middle East, which continues persistently to be excluded from these efforts and from this new spirit.

. It is as though for that part of the world the international community has resigned itself to the continuance of tension - a tension that has existed there for four decades - and only expresses its concern in the case of sudden and intermittent flare-ups in that region.

However, the strategic importance of that region, its historic and cultural heritage, should have been the foundation for stability, security and well-being for the entire world. Everyone here has reaffirmed that fact again and again.

In his report to the General Assembly the Secretary-General stated in this respect:

> "Lasting peace will come to the Middle East only when the principles of international law govern the relations between States, when disputes are resolved through peaceful means, when the aspirations of those deprived of their rights have been fulfilled." (A/45/1, p. 10)

This emphasizes once again the fact that the conflict in the Middle East will not come to an end unless energetic action is undertaken to restore the national rights of the Palestinian people, to obtain the withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, and thus put an end to Israeli expansionism.

This logic of Israeli expansionism, which implies a negation of the existence of the Palestinian people as a nation, has for over four decades been based on successive faits accomplis inspired by territorial greed, events that have occurred as a result of the impunity that Israel knows it enjoys.

(Mr. Bensid, Algeria)

Because of that impunity the Tel Aviv régime has kept on stretching the limits of the intolerable. In order to accomplish its hegemonic designs it pursues a systematic policy of aggression, a policy which shows no concern for the sovereignty of the States of the region or for the established rules and instruments of international law, or even, as we saw only a few days ago, for the unanimous decisions of the Security Council.

How can there be any prospect of a settlement in the Middle East as long as the obstinacy and the aggressive policy of the Israeli régime continues to arouse only moral repudiation? How could there be any prospect of peace while the Security Council, the organ entrusted with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, has not reacted with resolve and with the means conferred on it by the Charter?

How could there be any peace in that troubled region unless the Council implemented with determination its own resolutions on occupied Palestine, on the Syrian Golan Heights and on South Lebanon?

These are the terms of the legitimate and pressing claims constantly made by the Arab populations of those territories that are suffering physically, materially and spiritually because of their refusal to submit to total domination.

At the very time when the world is discovering with alarm that atrocities continue to be committed daily against the Palestinian people and against the other Arab populations under occupation, we wonder how many massacres, how many hardships, will be required before the Security Council and those of its members that have been given special responsibilities decide to allow the necessary measures to be taken to redress the injustices. We must repeat once again that reactions of indignation alone have never had any effect on the Israeli régime. They are not enough. The régime of occupation even finds in them grounds for

(Mr. Bensid, Algeria)

intransigence. We see this in the savagery and the methods that have been used against the intifadah. We see it also in the revolting frequency of the bombings in Lebanon and in the hardships imposed on the Palestinian and Lebanese civilian populations. We see it as well in the indifference to the Zionization of the Syrian Golan and the occupation of parts of Lebanese territory. It is also reflected in the massive settlement of occupied territories, and particularly of Al-Quds, by Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union.

Given this inaction on the part of the Council, it is not surprising that the most authorized spokesmen of the Israeli régime talk in terms that leave no doubt as to their intentions and as to the future that they foresee for the Arab populations.

Thus, at the end of the twentieth century, we hear terms that smack of an era from which mankind thought it was already free. With no sense of decency or morality whatsoever, the most highly placed spokesmen of the Israeli régime are openly talking about ideas such as massive transfer, isolation, or domination by fire and the sword for the Palestinian people.

We can never recall often enough that no lasting peace will be established in the Middle East without a settlement of the core of the conflict, that is, the question of Palestine. This means that there will never be any genuine peace without the restoration of all the national rights of the Palestinian people, and at the same time that all occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, must be evacuated.

This also presupposes that the sole representative chosen by the Palestinian people, the Palestine Liberation Organization, must be fully involved in all negotiations that affect the future of the people of which it is the emanation.

(Mr. Bensid, Algeria)

Inspired by these basic facts, the General Assembly has already identified the elements of such a settlement by confirming the national dimension of the Palestinian people, by reaffirming the need for the unconditional withdrawal by Israel from all Arab occupied territories, and by recognizing for the Palestine Liberation Organization the status of equal partner in all stages of a settlement to the Middle East conflict.

It was thus that, on the basis of those fundamental facts, the General Assembly expressed, by an overwhelming majority, its choice of the only framework that would make it possible to take into account all aspects of the conflict in the Middle East: an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing.

By the proclamation, on 15 November 1988, of the State of Palestine, the representatives chosen by the Palestinian people, solemnly called for the convening of that Conference, with a view to the just and definitive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East. The Arab nation itself, at its subsequent summit meetings, endorsed that choice. Today we can affirm in this respect that the international community as a whole supports the principle of the holding of that Conference on the bases established by the General Assembly.

It is only the Israeli leaders and those who support them today who persist in their refusal: refusal of the Conference, refusal to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization, refusal of peace.

Given this situation, the Security Council and particularly its permanent members, who will - need we emphasize? - be active participants in that Conference, must do all in their power to remove the obstacles that still stand in the way of the early convening of the Conference and therefore in the way of the establishment of peace.

(Mr. Bensid, Algeria)

That is a responsibility it must shoulder with all the authority conferred upon it by the Charter. In fact, there is no other choice. If the Council wishes to strengthen the authority it has wielded recently in treating cases of violations of the principles of the non-use of force in the settlement of disputes and the non-acquisition of territories by force, it must necessarily act with the same determination in settling the Middle East conflict.

At a time when the international community is declaring itself mobilized to restore legality and security in the Arab Gulf, realism and a real dedication to the principles of the United Nations mean that peace in the Middle East in general cannot be confined to relative commitments, and require that all hotbeds of tension in the region, first among which is the tragedy the Palestinian people has been suffering for four decades, must be approached with determination.

We are convinced that the paralysis and constant deferral of energetic action requested of the Council for the establishment of conditions conducive to a settlement of the conflict, in accordance with the principles set by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly, have themselves become factors in prolonging and worsening the conflict throughout the Middle East, and thereby endanger international peace and security.

It is because we still dare to hope that the Security Council, and in particular its permanent members, will respond to the requirements of peace - a peace that can only be comprehensive and indivisible - that we call upon it once again to decide most urgently on measures that will make it possible to focus all efforts towards establishing peace throughout the Middle East.

Mr. OKEYO (Kenya): On behalf of my delegation I should like first of all to pay a tribute to the Secretary-General for his ongoing efforts to find a peaceful solution to the problems in the Middle East. We have read his report with keen interest, and we hope that it will be helpful in our deliberations.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

In the past year, thanks in large measure to a relaxation of tension between the West and the East, the international community experienced far-reaching and dramatic changes. These changes are evident in many parts of the world. However, the recent changes have had very little effect on the situation in the Middle East. Indeed, that situation is now at the brink of a catastrophic war that could bring untold suffering there and elsewhere in the world.

The forty-fifth session of the Assembly affords us an excellent opportunity not only to reflect on the past decade but also to chart new paths that respond to the many changes and challenges in the world today. It is my delegation's hope that the discussions on this item will lessen the tension and reduce to a minimum the risks of imminent war in the region.

Kenya is proud to share with the countries of the Middle East many deeply rooted historical and cultural ties. Kenya is bound to the Middle East nations by common aspirations based on the principles of self-determination, democracy and respect for human rights and international law. Hence, a crisis in the Middle East adversely affects Kenya and other countries in many ways. Thus, peace in the region is beneficial to the international community as a whole.

Kenya wishes to reaffirm its strong commitment to a peaceful and lasting solution to the problems of the Palestinian people as well as the Iraq-Kuwait crisis, all of which should be seen in the broader perspective of the social and economic context of that particular region.

Whereas there are many issues that call for urgent attention and discussions, there is none that stands out as prominently as the unsettled question regarding the plight of the Palestinians. The Palestinian problem is the core of the Middle East crisis. Any attempt to resolve any other issue without dealing with the Palestinian issue and the Gulf crisis can, at best, only be a temporary solution.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

It is in this light that Kenya supports the call for a comprehensive and lasting solution to these major problems of the region. In this regard, Kenya supports the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East with the participation of all parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing. We are fully convinced that such a conference would be the right forum to discuss the Middle East situation in all its dimensions. The international community stands to gain rather than to lose in holding such a conference.

Kenya remains quite deeply concerned that no positive developments have been achieved regarding the Palestinian question. The world has continued to witness a rapid deterioration in the overall condition of the Palestinian people. Kenya is convinced that no just and lasting peace can be achieved in the Middle East until we address the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its rights to self-determination and to a State of its own.

The problem of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons should not be neglected. Kenya is concerned over the deterioration in the conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, and therefore appeals to Israel to withdraw from all territories occupied since 1967 and expresses regret that attempts that have been made to alleviate the situation have so far been rejected. Kenya is totally opposed to the acquisition of land by force of arms and supports Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which calls upon Israel to relinquish all territories seized during the 1967 war. Equally, Kenya does not accept the recent annexation of Kuwait by Iraq and has strongly condemned that brazen invasion. Kenya is complying fully with the provisions of all Security Council resolutions in this regard.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

We recognize the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland and the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live in peace and in secure and internationally recognized boundaries. We support, too, United Nations resolution 338 (1973), which calls for the parties in dispute in the Middle East to negotiate.

The annexation of Kuwait by Iraq has, in a most tragic manner, exacerbated the situation in the Middle East. The action by Iraq is unprecedented in the history of the United Nations. It is contrary to the very principles and ideals of the Organization. It must not be allowed to become the way of settling disputes among States. Iraq's blatant action has brought untold suffering to the people of Kuwait and has adversely affected many countries, including my own, Kenya. It must be checked by all means at the disposal of the Organization, otherwise the very existence of the smaller and weaker States will be threatened by the bigger and more powerful States.

Finally, Kenya is appealing to both Kuwait and Iraq eventually to settle their dispute peacefully, when Iraq withdraws from Kuwait. In this regard, it is most encouraging that both Washington and Baghdad have seen the wisdom of the application of diplomacy instead of armed confrontation.

It is my delegation's hope that the proposed dialogue will be fruitful so that the implementation of Security Council resolution 678 (1990) will not become necessary. The international community should be spared the consequences of Security Council resolution 678 (1990), and this can only be brought about if Iraq withdraws from Kuwait.

Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia): When we met here last year to consider the situation in the Middle East, we did so with some optimism that the parlous state of affairs in this troublesome part of the world might be reversed at last. Regrettably, developments in the region in the past year have dashed our hopes and set back expectations that things could be turned around soon.

Peace initiatives have died down even in the quarters that have every interest in keeping them alive. The channels of communication were interrupted soon after they were established and many possibilities have been left untapped and unexplored. The most promising among them, the dialogue between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the United States, ground to a halt before it addressed the substance. Bilateral efforts to promote dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians have proved stillborn. These developments and the absence of other diplomatic movement aimed at overcoming the impasse in this dangerous situation give us every reason for serious concern.

The outbreak of the crisis in the Gulf has added fuel to the flames. It has brought even greater instability to this volatile region and superimposed new dimensions to the entire problem. While insisting that the solution to the Gulf crisis be brought about on the basis of Security Council resolutions, the international community must not allow its attention to be diverted from the root causes that have for so many years thwarted the solution to the long-lasting crisis in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

There is no doubt that we should all seek a prompt solution to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. At the same time, however, that does not mean that the Middle East crisis should be ignored. On the contrary, the international community should address the Arab-Israeli conflict and the problem of Palestine with equal determination and urgency.

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

The deterioration of the situation and the absence of any peace efforts have had tragic consequences for those most directly concerned. Hopelessness and depression are creeping in among the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the numerous refugees in the entire region who are beginning to feel increasingly abandoned. Their confidence in the possibility of a political solution to the crisis has been shattered, which engenders impatience and leads them to believe that only by desperate acts can they achieve the rights that they are unjustly denied. This, in turn, is met by a brutal response: an escalation of the repression and further suffering and killing. This woeful spiral of violence has already claimed many innocent lives among both Palestinians and Israelis.

The international community cannot avoid its share of responsibility since it is evident that its inability to come to an agreement on the implementation of some basic tenets of human rights and justice have accounted for the exacerbation of the situation and tragic developments in the region.

What stops the international community from coming to grips with the problem that has poisoned international relations for so long?

It is axiomatic that Israel must withdraw from all the territories occupied since 1967, that the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and freedom should be realized and that all States in the region are entitled to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. This has been said time and again in texts adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the non-aligned and Arab countries, the European community and other regional organizations and, most recently, in the statement issued by the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Yet, the Secretary-General could not but note in his report submitted under this item that sufficient agreement does not exist, either within the Security Council, or among

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

the parties to the conflict, to permit the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East.

It is widely perceived that the principal reason for such a state of affairs is the position of Israel which has voted consistently against General Assembly resolutions calling for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East and rejected the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a partner to peace negotiations. This is unequivocally stated also in the note dated 27 September 1990 from the Acting Permanent Representative of Israel addressed to the Secretary-General.

Bearing in mind all the implications of the present situation for international peace and security, we maintain that the Security Council should urgently proceed to prepare the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all the parties directly concerned, including the PLO, and the five permanent members of the Security Council. We support, too, every effort of the permanent and other members of the Security Council to bring the positions of the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict closer to each other, to create a climate of confidence between them, and in this way to facilitate the convening and successful outcome of the international peace conference.

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

Yet, there are some encouraging signs on the Middle East's dark horizon. The people of Lebanon have embarked upon the course of national reconciliation after many years of conflict and suffering. Yugoslavia strongly supports the Taif Agreement as the basis for the resolution of the Lebanese crisis; this should enable the Lebanese people to decide on its destiny freely and independently.

It is also encouraging to note that Iran and Iraq have resumed direct talks. We are confident that this is the proper path to take in resolving the outstanding issues between these two countries and thereby solidifying peace between them. To bring peace to that troubled region and make it durable, it is necessary to restore trust and confidence and establish effective regional arrangements of security and co-operation. Like everywhere else, so in the Middle East there is no alternative to peace. Can anyone seriously doubt that the alternative would not result in tragic consequences for the entire region and roll back all the positive achievements in international relations of late?

Mr. ARIDOR (Israel): Let me begin by quoting some especially memorable excerpts from statements and analyses relating to the situation in the Middle East. One such statement that stands out quite prominently was made on 27 November 1989 - in many respects a long, long time ago:

> "If one asks why the situation in the Middle East has not yet been influenced by the new positive climate permeating most parts of the world, one can readily see that the cause is Israel ... The situation in the Middle East has its origin in the question of Palestine, the core, essence and crux of the problem in the region." (A/44/PV.64, pp. 13-15)

Perhaps the speaker did not consider his country part of the region as long ago as 1989. Maybe he was simply looking in the wrong direction. He was focused westward, at the expense of looking to the north. One wonders if events have not

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

overwhelmed this memorable assessment made by - of all people - the representative of Kuwait.

Another statement of interest made on 5 November 1989, in the general debate, blamed Israel for constituting

> "a threat to security and peace in the region and in the world at large ... These are the people who are primarily responsible for the pain suffered by the people of our region and for the state of instability, tension and terror that persists there." (A/44/PV.20, p. 32)

That poignant statement was made by none other than Mr. Tarik Aziz, the Foreign Minister of Iraq. Had I not known that the speaker represented Iraq and was castigating Israel, I would have thought that he represented Kuwait and was castigating Iraq.

On 27 November 1989, during the debate on the situation in the Middle East, another Arab representative presented his Government's analysis of the source of danger in the Middle East:

> "Although the world has been able in the course of this year to move other intractable crises towards settlement and understanding, the problem of the Middle East has not moved any nearer to the end of the tunnel. Why? Because Israel, the most intractable problem of all and the source of all the disasters and troubles of the Middle East, still acts under the influence of its expansionist, colonialist outlook ...". (A/44/PV.64, p. 93)

In retrospect, one can only marvel at the words of the representative of Saudi Arabia. After all, the 600,000 troops assembled by the international coalition and deployed in Saudi Arabia are not there to defend Saudi Arabia from Israel. If Israel really is the source of all disasters and troubles in the Middle East, then Saddam Hussein most surprisingly emerges as a "Zionist entity".

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

Those statements purported to reflect a serious analysis of the situation in our region - the basis for contingency plans, solutions and abundant free advice for outsiders. Like the pagan belief in human sacrifice to cure diseases, so have Arab States offered up Israel on the altar of their own maladies. What a superstition, shared by so many sovereign States at the close of the twentieth century. The remedy was futile in ancient times. It is worthless today. The tragic outcome is seen in Kuwait. Arab States were held hostage, drugged, lulled and blinded by their own superstitions. But if the Iraqi obliteration of Kuwait shattered one superstition once and for all, it is the fable of the happy and peaceful inter-Arab relations in the Middle East - a harmony disrupted only by Israel. The shifting sands of the turbulent Middle East could be swept under the carpet in this building only for so long. Today, the lumps and bulges are swelling under our feet. No amount of repetitive anti-Israel resolutions can drive any Iraqi tank out of Kuwait. Incidentally, every time I rise to speak from this rostrum, the representative of Iraq promptly leaves the Hall. One can only wonder what the Iraqis would do had I delivered this statement in Kuwait City.

But let me return to harsh reality. The source of instability and upheaval in the Middle East is inherent and endemic to the autocrats who rule the region. The following are some recent examples:

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

Saddam Hussein launched an aggressive war against Iran. Eight years of inhuman brutality brought untold suffering to the region. Over 1,000,000 lives were lost. Chemical weapons were used systematically against Iranian civilian and military targets, in breach of the Geneva Protocol of 1925. Moreover, the brunt of Saddam Hussein's criminal brutality was borne by the Kurdish minority unfortunate enough to live under Iraqi jurisdiction. It took Iraqi troops two days - 16 and 17 March 1988 - deliberately to slaughter 5,000 Kurdish civilians in the town of Halabja, in Kurdistan, with chemical weapons. Repeated armed assaults during 1988 and 1989 left over 700,000 Kurds as refugees.

Emerging with a false sense of self-confidence after war with Iranians and Kurds, Saddam Hussein turned from east to west. His next target was arch-rival and fellow-dictator Hafez al-Assad of Syria. It was time to settle accounts with the hated Syrians for supporting the hated Persians. General Michel Aoun, the defier of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon, began receiving massive amounts of Iraqi arms, including surface-to-surface missiles.

Then came the next targets to the south - Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Part of this story has already been told; the rest is still unfolding.

Meanwhile, the other Middle Eastern tyrant, Hafez al-Assad, was busy shelling East Beirut in July and August 1989, raining death and destruction on Lebanon - the war-torn country Assad claims for himself. Over 1,000 Lebanese civilians were killed by Syrian bombardment during 1989. Beirut - a city of 1,500,000 residents - was depopulated. Over 1,000,000 residents fled for their lives during the Syrian savagery the Pope termed genocide. Fifteen years of Syrian atrocities in Lebanon have fuelled the civil war in which over 150,000 people have been killed.

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

On 8 March 1989 Assad stated that Syria and Lebanon are "one people, in body, blood, and bones. We will not leave because we are a one-people nation." "We are one", said the lion - "Assad" in Arabic - before he swallowed the lamb. Syria sealed the fate of Lebanon in October 1990. When the bloodbath resumed, 700 Christian Lebanese were slaughtered by the Syrians - many shot in the head after surrender, with their arms tied behind their backs.

These two dictators have contributed to a very sanguine Middle East. As Lebanon was being "Kuwaitized", Kuwait was being "Lebanonized". Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have an international deployment to thank for not sharing the same fate.

There are many other lumps under the rug. One need only bend over and peek. Another Middle Eastern dictator, Colonel Qaddafi, grabbed and annexed a third of Chad in 1973. Eyeing the other two-thirds, he launched a full-scale invasion in 1986. Since then, undermining Chad has become a daily custom. Libya blackmailed the Sudan with oil; the Sudan complied by allowing Libyan-backed guerrillas to operate from Sudanese territory against Chad.

But Libya helped to destabilize the Sudan as well. On 13 September 1989 Qadaffi boasted:

> "We armed 10,000 fighters from the Garang movement to help them overthrow the Numairi régime."

The Sudan, reeling from one disaster to the next, was only made worse by Qadaffi's meddling. The 23-year-old civil war rages on unabated. Since 1986, 500,000 Sudanese have died as a result of war and hunger - victims of starvation induced by the Libyan-backed Government. Additional tens of thousands have been slaughtered by Government-run militias.

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

Iran still meddles in Lebanon. Its Shi'ite proxies engage in repeated battles with Syrian Shi'ite proxies, causing hundreds of deaths. Iran still claims Bahrain in its entirety, and claims islands controlled by the United Arab Emirates. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been locked in bitter disputes over religious doctrine and control of the Gulf - so bitter, in fact, that they have spilled over into the Holy Places. Iranian-instigated rioting in Mecca left 402 dead in 1987. In the Middle Eastern food chain, in which big fish eat smaller fish, other Gulf States are constantly at each other's throats.

International terrorism could not exist had it no countries from which to operate. Tragically, this is applicable to the Middle East. Syria directs anti-Iraqi terrorists; Iraq directs anti-Iranian terrorists; Iran directs anti-Iraqi, anti-Bahraini, anti-Moroccan and anti-Tunisian terrorists. Iran directed anti-Kuwaiti terrorism until the slaughter in Mecca. From then on, Iran primarily targeted Saudi Arabia. In 1988 the number of terrorist attacks against Saudi Arabia doubled.

Libya should not be overlooked in this list. Libya directs anti-Yemeni, anti-Sudanese, anti-Tunisian and anti-Iraqi terrorism. Libya is also busily distributing to international terrorists around the world the 1,000 tons of Semtex-H purchased in Eastern Europe.

The 30 terrorist groups supported by Libya have spread carnage from Ulster and Beirut to Port of Spain, from the Scottish and Nigerian skies to Berlin discothèques and Israeli beaches. PLO terrorism, directed against Egypt, Lebanon and fellow Palestinians, is now, needless to say, at the bidding of Saddam Hussein - Israel, of course, being the main target. The list of Middle Eastern harmony is too exhaustive to be related in its entirety.

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

All these factors constitute major threats to international peace and security. Since they emanate from the Middle East they should have been dealt with under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East". To underplay these issues year after year is to refuse to recognize the fact that the Middle East is a very "meddled" East - so "meddled", in fact, that the Arab-refugee problem, the cause célèbre of many Arab States, is itself an indicator of the extent of Arab brotherhood in the Middle East. Figures as to the total number of refugees and the amount, in contributions, pledged by Arab States - figures supplied by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East - provide some glaring truths. If we divide the 1989 contributions by the total number of refugees we arrive at the following figures.

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

Bahrain, a very wealthy country, gave a grand total of 1.2 cents per refugee per year; Qatar, a little over 8 cents per refugee; Saudi Arabia, 50 cents; Syria, less than 3 cents; Libya, 41 cents; Iran, 1.2 cents; Iraq, zero. When those sums are added together we reach about one dollar per refugee per year. It does not amount even to a respectable tip.

Israel's problem is Arab hatred. The Arab problem, however, is not Israel, but brotherly States. To cry "Israel" instead of facing that reality is like the cry of "Fire" from a man drowning in a flood.

But the words "fire" and "flood" do not express the gravity of the situation in the Middle East. We are not merely facing fire or water. We are facing the threat of nuclear weapons. Saddam Hussein will stop at nothing. For over a decade he has been working feverishly to develop a nuclear capability. He was stopped by Israel in 1981. We did our share in contributing to non-proliferation in the Middle East. But the United Nations condemned Israel. Many countries continued to supply Iraq with nuclear technology. Now the world faces the terrifying prospect of its own making. There are States with a nuclear capability, and there are, and have always been, crazy rulers on this planet. There has never been a combination of the two.

This is the grave danger threatening the Middle East and the world. It is all a question of time. And gaining time is Saddam Hussein's greatest talent. President Bush has stated:

> "Every day that passes brings Saddam one step closer to realizing his goal of a nuclear-weapons arsenal. ... No one knows precisely when this dictator may acquire atomic weapons. ... But we do know this for sure: he has never possessed a weapon that he did not use."

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

The magnitude of this threat does not stop there. Baghdad today is not only the capital of Iraq: it is also the capital of international terrorism. Abu Nidal, Abu Abbas, Habash, Hawatmeh and their henchmen are honoured guests of Saddam Hussein. They are all old hands at terror which respects no boundaries. They would like nothing more than to terrorize the world with a nuclear device. It was Abu Abbas of the PLO who warned that "Some day we will have missiles that can reach New York." This includes First Avenue.

The international community is encountering enough difficulties with Saddam Hussein as it is. It would be difficult to imagine how the world, let alone the Middle East, would cope with the mortal threat of a Saddam Hussein with a nuclear bomb.

While close to one million troops are already crowded into the Gulf Peninsula, the General Assembly resolutions on the situation in the Middle East still reaffirm the confiction that "the question of Palestine is the core of the conflict in the Middle East". This is utter nonsense. While the only element of stability, the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, stands rock solid, in spite of the turmoil in the region, the General Assembly resolutions on the situation in the Middle East constantly reject it. This is utter malice.

It is no wonder that outside observers who purport to be experts on the workings of the Middle East have been misled time and time again. In the 1950s the linchpin of the Western-inspired regional security system in the Middle East was, ironically, Iraq. The Baghdad Pact collapsed overnight with the overthrow of the Hashemite régime. The West was taken by surprise.

In the 1960s the mainstay of Western interests was Libya under the stable monarchy of King Idris. He was overthrown by Qaddafi. In the 1970s it was Iran under the Shah that was deemed the keystone of regional stability. That conviction

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

was shattered by Khomeinism. In the 1980s, sure enough, it was Iraq that gained the trust of the international community as the force of stability able to contain Iran.

Saddam Hussein's armaments were stocked to the hilt by hundreds of Western companies. Then came the sudden end to the Persian Gulf war. Surprise again. Then came the sudden volte-face. The Iraqi guardian became the Iraqi predator, devouring Kuwait and threatening to overrun the Arabian Peninsula. And who will be the favourite in the 1990s? Hafez al-Assad? These are all shifting sands of self-delusion. Outside observers have erred time and time again. No one has a monopoly on wisdom.

The problems in the Middle East are multifaceted and intractable - a region in which outdated ideologies and modes of thought still reign, where the state of war is considered the normal state of affairs. Here, the destruction of sovereign States is deemed legitimate. The illegal use of force is regarded as an acceptable diplomatic procedure. Here, the reintroduction of the horrors of chemical and biological weapons is seen as praiseworthy. The taking of hostages by the hundreds of thousands is taken in stride. The pervading presence of dictatorship is deemed a law of nature. Here, terrorist groups are deemed a military asset. Fundamentalism and fanaticism are seen as tools for political manipulation and one-upmanship. If these are the overriding characteristics, it is no wonder Israel, the only democracy in the region, is not accepted as legitimate.

These are the attributes of the Middle East which need to be addressed if the situation is to be analysed in the interests of a better future for the region.

Reality cannot be confined in the straitjacket of stultified resolutions. There is hope. The situation in the Middle East will be transformed. The forces of rapid change and democratization will not bypass the Middle East. United Nations resolutions that blame Israel for the Middle East situation will have no

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

place in Middle Eastern history. They will remain a remote footnote in the history of the United Nations. Those students who will skip over this footnote will not be missing much.

Mr. SCIALOJA (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Community and its member States.

The Twelve are following with the utmost concern the problems of the Middle East. It is unfortunate that the end of the East-West confrontation has not yet brought about a solution to the problems of that region.

The Twelve believe that all opportunities should be taken for the peaceful solution of the conflicts in the Middle East. They are convinced that relations of trust and co-operation must be fostered between the countries of the region so as to establish a situation of stability, security, economic and social welfare and respect for civil and political rights, to prevent the recurrence of crisis, to curb the arms race and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Community and its member States are ready to co-operate with the countries concerned in the search for principles, rules and structures to that end, and to examine measures to enhance security and stability in the region.*

The Twelve express their deep concern at the continuing deadlock in the Gulf crisis with Iraq's persistent violation of international legality and in particular the prolonged and destructive occupation of Kuwait, the oppression and deportation of its population, the holding of foreign hostages and the repeated violation of conventions governing diplomatic relations.

The Twelve support all the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since the Iraqi invasion and denounce Iraq's repeated violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Far from meeting its responsibilities under international humanitarian law concerning the treatment of protected persons under its control, Iraq is engaged in a determined, systematic campaign to eradicate the very identity of the

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* Mr. Awoonor (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Scialoja, Italy)

State of Kuwait. Furthermore, by pushing the indigenous population to leave, Iraq is attempting to change the demographic structure of the country it occupies.

Such acts cannot be tolerated. The European Community and its member States attach the highest priority to the solution of this crisis on the basis of the Security Council resolutions, and reaffirm that no solution is possible without the prior implementation of those resolutions.

The Twelve demand that Iraqi forces immediately, totally and unconditionally withdraw from Kuwait, that Kuwait's legitimate Government be restored and that all foreign citizens who so desire be allowed to leave Iraq and Kuwait.

The Twelve, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, have repeatedly condemned the Iraqi practice of holding foreign nationals as hostages and keeping some of them at strategic sites. They remind Iraq of its international obligations in that respect and continue to hold the Iraqi Government fully responsible for the safety of foreign nationals. The Twelve reaffirm their total solidarity in achieving the immediate release of all foreign citizens trapped in Iraq and Kuwait. The Twelve have denounced the unscrupulous use Iraq has made of them with the sole and vain purpose of trying to divide the international community. They have unreservedly condemned that manoeuvre carried out in contempt of the most basic humanitarian rules. Those committing these grave breaches will be held personally responsible. The Twelve have taken note of the intention of the Iraqi authorities to release all foreign hostages and they expect that Iraq will fully abide by Security Council resolution 664 (1990) and permit the immediate departure of all hostages.

The Twelve also demand that in accordance with the Vienna Convention Iraq permit the free and unhindered departure of diplomats accredited to Kuwait who are at present prevented from leaving Iraq.

(Mr. Scialoja, Italy)

The Twelve express their satisfaction at the high degree of consensus in the international community on the principles I have just mentioned. They believe that this consensus should be preserved in order for a peaceful solution of the crisis to be achieved. The Community and its member States are determined scrupulously to adhere to the embargo and to the other measures decided upon by the Security Council, and call upon all other States to act in the same way. They also strongly support Security Council resolution 678 (1990) and urge Iraq to take advantage of the pause of goodwill by complying with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

The position of the Twelve on the question of Palestine was expressed more fully during the debate on agenda item 23. The Twelve wish to stress their intention to work for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the principles set out by the Community in its previous declarations, namely the right of all States of the region, including Israel, to exist within secure, recognized and guaranteed boundaries on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the right to justice of all peoples in the region, which includes recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination with all this implies.

The Twelve believe that a peaceful settlement based on those principles should be achieved through the convening, at an appropriate time, of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations. In their view such a conference would be an appropriate forum for direct negotiations between the parties concerned. The Twelve reiterate that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) should be a part of this process.

(Mr. Scialoja, Italy)

In accordance with their firm commitment to upholding international law, the Twelve reaffirm the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. This principle, embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and recalled in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), is binding upon all States. This implies that Israel must put an end to the territorial occupation it has maintained since the 1967 conflict.

We have witnessed a deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories caused by the increasing number of illegal Israeli settlements. The Twelve stress that any change in the demographic structure of the occupied territories is illegal under international law and constitutes an obstacle to the peace process. The settlement policy in the territories, including East Jerusalem, occupied by Israel since 1967 is making territorial compromise even more difficult. Indeed, establishing new settlements or enlarging existing ones is the reverse of the kind of confidence-building measures that could contribute to a peaceful solution. The Twelve reaffirm the right of freedom of movement in accordance with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In that regard they support the right of Jews who wish to do so to emigrate.

Furthermore, the Twelve consider as null and void the unilateral decision taken by Israel to modify the status of Jerusalem. They reaffirm the significance of Jerusalem, a Holy City of three religions, and state that everyone's freedom of access to places of worship must be safeguarded.

Finally, the Twelve reiterate that the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, must be implemented in the occupied territories. Israel's persistent refusal to acknowledge that the Convention is fully applicable can in no way be justified and is a matter of great concern to the Twelve. The Security

(Mr. Scialoja, Italy)

Council has confirmed in many resolutions that the Fourth Geneva Convention does indeed apply to the Israeli-occupied territories, most recently in its resolutions 636 (1989), 641 (1989), 672 (1990) and 673 (1990), which the Twelve unreservedly support.

(Mr. Scialoja, Italy)

The 12 States members of the European Community are aware of the extreme gravity and complexity of the Palestinian problem. It is a further injustice to the Arab people that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait - from which, as from any aggression, all should unequivocally dissociate themselves - has delayed the search for progress towards a solution to the problems of Palestine. The Twelve are ready to contribute, by means of an intense dialogue with all the parties concerned, to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution.

On this occasion the Twelve wish also to underline that all measures taken by Israel to impose its law, jurisdiction and administration in the ocucpied Syrian Golan are null and void.

In Lebanon, after 15 years of foreign intervention and intercommunal strife, it is vital to end the sufferings of the population and further loss of innocent lives. The Twelve express their deep dismay at the continuing violence in Lebanon. They hope that a process of national reconciliation will effectively develop in that country.

They reaffirm their strong support for the implementation of the Taif Agreements, whose ratification by the Lebanese Parliament on 21 August 1990 was a historic step. The Twelve, while taking note of recent positive developments in their implementation, such as the creation of the Greater Beirut Security Plan, stress that the Agreements should be carried out by all concerned as soon as possible, thus bringing about the full restoration of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of a Lebanon free of all foreign troops. The Twelve call upon all parties in Lebanon to take part in this process and to co-operate with a view to the immediate restoration of conditions preventing the recurrence of such violence. The European Community and its member States will continue to support that process fully, and are ready to participate in the reconstruction of the country.

(Mr. Scialoja, Italy)

The Twelve reiterate that the persistence of the Israeli occupation of areas of southern Lebanon, contrary to the relevant Security Council resolutions, constitutes an obstacle to the establishment of conditions of stability and security in the region.

The Twelve firmly support the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and wish to secure the best possible conditions of safety for its contingents, three of which belong to States members of the European Community. They once more reaffirm the responsibility of all States Members of the United Nations to meet their financial obligations in full in order to solve UNIFIL's budgetary crisis.

Finally, while welcoming the release of some hostages detained in Lebanon, the Twelve underline their deep concern for the fate of those who are still held captive, some of whom are citizens of States members of the Community. The Twelve strongly appeal for the immediate release of all hostages.

The States members of the European Community have noted the Iraqi decision to withdraw from Iranian territory, to exchange prisoners of war and to acknowledge the validity of the Algiers Agreement of 1975. In this regard, the Twelve reiterate that they attach great importance to the implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987), in all its parts. The Twelve share the Secretary-General's view that the full implementation of resolution 598 (1987) could well contribute to a marked improvement of the situation in the region as a whole.

Just and lasting solutions to the different problems of the Middle East can only contribute to giving full meaning to the role that the Arab world should play in the international community and to strengthening the historical links between Europe and all the countries of the region.

Mr. LICHEM (Austria): It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the past year has been an annus mirabilis, a miracle year. The cold war has come to an end, significant progress has been made in regional disarmament and co-operation and the aspirations of many a nation that seemed unrealizable only a short while ago are becoming reality. Progress has also been made with regard to some remaining regional conflicts.

On the other hand, however, it is also hardly an exaggeration to state that the situation in the Middle East has not only remained immune to the positive developments elsewhere, but has in fact gone from bad to worse. The one exception to this sombre picture, the one silver lining to the clouds on this dark horizon is Lebanon, where recent changes point in the direction of national reconciliation, political reform and the restoration of the unity, independence and sovereignty of Lebanon on its entire territory.

As if the situation in the Middle East had not already been explosive enough, the invasion and purported annexation of Kuwait by Iraq has added yet another danger, has lit yet another fuse. We fear that the Secretary-General may very well be correct in his assessment in his latest report on the work of the Organization that

> "It is clear that progress cannot be made on the overall situation in the region, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, until the present crisis is set on the way to solution in accordance with the position taken by the Security Council." (A/45/1, p. 10)

An urgent solution to the Gulf crisis based on the rule of law could, however, have an extraordinary impact on the whole situation in the Middle East and give a new, much needed impetus to efforts aimed at a just and peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

(Mr. Lichem, Austria)

The events that began on 2 August 1990 have led to an unprecedented response from the United Nations. The decisions taken by the Security Council have moved the society of nations closer to the effective establishment of a system of collective security and, through it, towards the rule of law in international relations. This is a development to be welcomed by everyone, though there should be no doubt that for this original dream of the United Nations to become reality the rule of law must be applied everywhere. For the Security Council this means - in general - that it has to be, and has to be allowed to be, just and fair in all the cases brought before it. The Security Council has to, and has to be allowed to, uphold and if necessary enforce the rule of law, regardless of where and by whom a breach of law occurs. Consequently, the Security Council should continue to be seized of the Middle East problem, with a view to playing an effective role in the search for a fair, lasting and peaceful solution.

We were encouraged to note for the first time that there is now unanimity among the permanent members of the Security Council that the

> "prolonged delay in the settlement of the Middle East problem poses a grave threat to peace and security in the region as well as the world" (A/45/709, para. 5)

and that

> "efforts must be continued on an urgent basis to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the situation in the Middle East, particularly a solution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects". (ibid., para. 6)

(Mr. Lichem, Austria)

By the same token, we have to note with regret that the divergence of views as to the role that the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole could play in this regard still persists. When Austria joins the Security Council, on 1 January, this will certainly be one of our priorities. It is not only that the situation warrants a more active and effective role for the Security Council; it is also that the newly gained influence, prestige and credibility of the Council must be maintained if collective security and the rule of law are indeed to be realized.

Recent laudable bilateral efforts aimed at promoting a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians have, regrettably, reached an impasse. The historic opening created by the implicit recognition of Israel and the renunciation of terrorism by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has not yet evoked similar Israeli signs of goodwill. On the contrary, renewed talk about a greater Israel, the settlement of immigrants in the occupied territories in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, measures aimed at breaking the resistance of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories, and the refusal to co-operate with a mission of the Secretary-General authorized by the Security Council point in the opposite direction.

It would be erroneous for the Israeli leadership to believe that the current Gulf crisis has fundamentally changed the question of Palestine. The PLO continues to be regarded as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, especially by the Palestinians themselves. As in any serious negotiations aimed at a tenable result, one has to negotiate with those who can deliver that result. Direct contacts between Israelis and Palestinians are necessary. These contacts should then pave the way for the convening, at an appropriate time, of an international peace conference, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including, of course, the PLO.

(Mr. Lichem, Austria)

In the mean time the protection of the civilian Palestinian population in the occupied territories needs to be improved. It is no longer enough to deplore what is happening and to call for restraint. We hope that the current focus on practical measures aimed at providing better protection will yield positive results, will help to break the vicious cycle of violence and thus also contribute to a climate that allows for long overdue negotiations.

In our view, peace cannot be achieved through the policy of the iron fist but must be built on respect for international law. Austria regards the following elements as essential to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution: observance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) based on the principle "land for peace", which to this day provide the most widely accepted basis for a solution; withdrawal from occupied territories; respect for the right of all States, including Israel, to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people and of the need for participation by its legitimate representative, the PLO, in the negotiating process.

Mr. BUGTI (Pakistan): In the Middle East the prospects of peace, unfortunately, remain as elusive as they were when the General Assembly first considered the threat posed to international peace and security by developments in the region over 40 years ago. The Secretary-General has also referred to this impasse in his report on the work of the Organization, noting that

> "an impasse has been reached in the effort to promote a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. The intifadah will soon enter its fourth year and, regrettably, the situation in the occupied territories remains bleak, with little hope of early progress." (A/45/1, p. 10)

(Mr. Bugti, Pakistan)

The current debate is indeed another reminder of Israel's intransigence and its deliberate policy of thwarting every peace initiative. The reason for its attitude is simple. Israel persists in the mistaken belief that through its military preponderance it will be able in the course of time to transform into a fait accompli its gradual absorption of the Palestinian and Arab territories which, through massive abuse of force, it continues to occupy illegally. We therefore condemn once again Israel's policy of expansion and annexation and its continued occupation of the southern territories of Lebanon.

The crux of the problem in the Middle East has been the denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and statehood. Neither through five wars nor through its contemptuous dismissal of Palestinian rights has Israel been able to wish away this problem. Neither through the protracted use of force and terror nor through its repeated attempts to liquidate the identity of the Palestinian people has Israel succeeded in extinguishing the flame of freedom, which for over four decades the Palestinian people have kept alight at the cost of incalculable suffering and sacrifice.

The intifadah in the occupied Palestinian territories since 9 December 1987 has demonstrated once again the determination of the Palestinian people to be free and independent. According to the Database project on Palestinian human rights, as of 31 August 1990 the number of Palestinians killed by the Israeli authorities had reached a total 856. Nearly 99,150 Palestinians had been wounded, while more than 85,000 had been imprisoned. According to Amnesty International, 13,000 Palestinians remained in detention at the end of 1989. Since then the international community has witnessed the tragic events at Al-Haram Al-Shareef, where, on 8 October 1990, in violation of the Holy Place, Israeli border forces brutally shot 22 Palestinians and wounded over 200. Recent events in the Gaza

(Mr. Bugti, Pakistan)

Strip have shown a continuation of the Israeli campaign of oppression, resulting in over 750 casualties in two days alone, from 3 to 5 November.

Given the situation in the occupied territories, the international community must take practical steps to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people. The Secretary-General, too, in his report to the Security Council dated 31 October 1990, while finding Israel in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, urged that

> "far more is required on the part of the international community to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied territories." (S/21919 and Corr.1, para. 18)

(Mr. Bugti, Pakistan)

For too long has Israel's obduracy been allowed to run rampant in the Middle East. Israel's distorted vision of its destiny, buttressed by a siege mentality, has engendered grave turmoil and turbulence in the Middle East and has wrought havoc on its neighbours. It continues its occupation of southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights, even while the Arab desire for a genuine peace has been repeatedly made manifest, as it was in the resolution adopted in Algiers by the Palestine National Council (PNC) in 1983.

There is no longer room for prevarication: the PNC resolution is clear and unambiguous; it underlines the necessity of holding an effective international conference on the Middle East problem and its essence, the Palestinian cause. The conference will be held under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the struggle in the region, on an equal footing, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The conference will be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the assurance that the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people will be upheld. First and foremost among these rights are the right to self-determination and the liberation of all Palestinian and Arab territories that Israel has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

No nation need condemn itself to a perpetual state of war. Israel has a choice between a durable peace and an ephemeral security based on the instruments of war and coercion. Prospects for a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East do still exist, and can be revived if Israel is willing to negotiate on the basis of the proposal for an international peace conference on the Middle East.

(Mr. Bugti, Pakistan)

We believe that the members of the Security Council, particularly its permanent members, have a special responsibility for providing the necessary impetus for such a conference to be convened.

More than 40 years ago the Palestinian people were brutally uprooted from their ancient homeland. All these years the people of Pakistan have remained steadfast in their support for the just cause of the Palestinian people. I wish to take this opportunity to renew our pledge of solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their right to self-determination and independence, and with the Arab States in their efforts to resolve the Middle East conflict and strengthen peace and stability in their region.

There can be no durable peace in the Middle East until and unless justice is done for the Palestinian people and Israel withdraws fully from all the occupied Arab territory. For four decades the Palestinians have suffered a tragic life. They are entitled to a homeland of their own. We join all fair-minded nations in supporting their righteous cause.

The Iraqi invasion and subsequent annexation of Kuwait clearly violated the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and well-established norms of inter-State conduct. The response of the international community was swift and sharp. The Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Security Council and also the Arab League categorically rejected the aggression as totally inadmissible, and demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the restoration of the legitimate Government.

The principle of the non-use of force for settling disputes is of the highest consequence. The issues at stake are of universal concern and transcend any regional considerations or solutions. Given its strong belief in the sanctity of

(Mr. Bugti, Pakistan)

international law and its historical experience, the Muslim world could not have condoned the Iraqi aggression against and occupation of a brotherly, Islamic State.

If Iraq had not been challenged for its indefensible act, a dangerous precedent in the conduct of inter-State relations would have been established. In our view, it is imperative that Iraq should unconditionally and immediately withdraw all its forces from Kuwait. The sovereignty and independence of the State of Kuwait and its legitimate Government must be restored, free of all outside influence or interference. Only thus can respect for international law and the norms of inter-State behaviour be restored. Only thus can the grave threat to international peace and security be overcome.

Mr. AFONSO (Mozambique): When I addressed the Assembly last year during the consideration of this agenda item, I stated that the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East continued to be a matter of grave concern to the international community. Since then, as previous speakers have correctly indicated, events in that region have continued to develop in a most threatening and unprecedented manner, especially in recent months.

The Middle East is an exception to the positive political developments the international community has been witnessing since the last session of the General Assembly. The expectations we all had in following, as we are following now, the significant progress made in virtually all other major political conflicts and problems around the world do not seem to have influenced the Middle East crisis in any positive way. Rather, the situation in the Middle East seems to be evolving in quite the reverse direction, contrary to all our expectations.

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

Since last August a new, explosive situation has developed in the region. The invasion, occupation and annexation of Kuwait have diverted the attention of the international community from the search for a lasting solution to the Middle East question. What has been created in the Gulf as a result is a very complex and dangerious military and political situation: in less than three months the Gulf region has experienced an accelerated military build-up which probably puts the region at the top of the list in terms of concentrations of offensive forces and modern weaponry. This has put an additional burden on the peace-loving countries in their quest for stronger international peace and security.

I wish to repeat our appeal to Iraq to heed the voice of the international community and unconditionally withdraw its forces from Kuwait and allow that country's national sovereignty to be restored. My Government continues to place its faith in a peaceful settlement to restore Kuwait's national independence and sovereignty.

We particularly hope that the provisions of Security Council resolution 678 (1990) of 29 November, especially the 15 January deadline, will not have to be invoked. To that end, we deem it incumbent on the parties directly involved to exercise restraint and demonstrate their sense of statesmanship in order to prevent war.

We welcome and encourage the positive initiatives towards dialogue since the adoption of Security Council resolution 678 (1990); likewise, we welcome the recent decision by Iraq to release all foreign citizens who have been kept in captivity since last August. We hope that Iraq will proceed expeditiously to comply with all the other Security Council resolutions.

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

We sincerely hope that all parties to the conflict will co-operate and take a positive attitude so as to facilitate a peaceful solution to the problem. An urgent and peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis would certainly help the international community to concentrate fully on the search for a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the question of Palestine, which continues to be the core of the Middle East conflict.

The continued acts of repression and gross violation of fundamental human rights in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories and, above all, the denial of the birthright of the Palestinian people to self-determination, have resulted in an unprecedented uprising in those territories.

The deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories has reached alarming proportions. Despite repeated international appeals, Israel has continued its reliance on military force to deal with the uprising. As a result, the number of casualties involving innocent civilians, as well as damage to property, continues to increase. The massacres of innocent civilians on 8 October at the Al-Haram Al-Shareef in Jerusalem are the most frightening of the recent tragic events. The total figure of identified casualties since the beginning of the uprising, now in its third year, is close to 1,000. These are indeed tragic events which demand decisive action from the world community.

We wish to register our profound indignation at the failure fully to implement Security Council resolutions regarding the occupied territories. We particularly deplore the refusal by Israel to comply with the provisions of Security Council resolution 672 (1990), which would have permitted the Secretary-General to send a fact-finding mission to the region. Hence, we call upon the Government of Israel to reconsider its position and to allow the Secretary-General to fulfil his noble mandate.

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

According to the observations contained in the Secretary-General's report, despite unanimity on the need for a lasting and comprehensive settlement of the problem,

"sufficient agreement does not exist, either within the Security Council, or amongst the parties to the conflict, to permit the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East as called for in resolution 44/42." (A/45/709, para. 5)

I recall that the 1989 report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization contained similar conclusions. Year after year, the international community is faced with a continued lack of progress on this subject. The question is, for how long?

My delegation wishes to place on record its total endorsement of the conclusions contained in paragraph 7 of the report (A/45/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We agree that the Security Council must display the same readiness and resoluteness in dealing with the question of Palestine as it has been doing in the case of the Gulf crisis. Likewise, my delegation regards the resumption of dialogue between the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organization as an important feature in the overall search for peace in the Middle East region. In our view, it is only fair and proper to gather the views of all the parties concerned so as to remove the obstacles existing partially as a result of the continued imbalance in opportunities.

Let me also underscore that it is high time for Israel to abide by the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and to respect the national independence, unity and integrity of Lebanon. Since the brutal invasion in 1982, the people of that country have not been able freely to enjoy a peaceful

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

life. We express our strong support for the efforts to safeguard Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty and the unity of its people.

My delegation continues to believe strongly that the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement of the situation in the Middle East can only be brought about through dialogue and negotiations and by scrupulous respect for the legitimate interests of all parties concerned. Therefore, we reiterate the urgent need for the convening of the International Peace Conference, as envisaged in numerous United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 44/42 of 6 December 1989. We appeal once again to all peace-loving countries to work collectively to remove the obstacles which have so far impeded the convening of the Conference.

The provisions of the aforementioned resolution call, inter alia, for the participation on an equal footing, of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization and the five permanent members of the Security Council. They further emphasize the need for the withdrawal of Israel from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and for the security of all States in the region, within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

The need for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of this crisis places greater and increased demand on the permanent members of the Security Council, in view of their special responsibilities. To that end, we encourage them to work out their differences, which have proven to be harmful for the establishment of the Preparatory Committee of the Conference.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate our firm conviction that the existence of both the State of Israel and the Palestinian State are two undeniable realities. We absolutely cannot condone that one State should exist by destroying the other or refusing to accept its existence. This has, unfortunately, been the

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

sad situation in the nearly five decades of the existence of the United Nations. The need for negotiations must prevail against the resort to armed confrontation. We hope that the current international climate will exert a positive influence on the Middle East question.

Mr. SUAREZ (Philippines): The situation in the Middle East has been one of the most vexing concerns of the United Nations during all of the 45 years of the Organization's existence; and by most indications, it seems that it will remain so for some years to come.

In retrospect, the record of the Organziation on this issue cannot be considered completely dismal. Armed conflicts - often fiercely fought contests - have erupted in the region, and the United Nations did succeed on those occasions in brokering cease-fires or in prodding concerned parties to open negotiations.

(Mr. Suarez, Philippines)

However, the many attempts by the United Nations to bring about a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region have thus far failed, but certainly not for want of determination on the part of our Organization.

The innumerable resolutions that have been adopted by the Assembly - an increasing number unanimously - as well as the peace-keeping operations, to which precious resources, even lives, have been committed by the international community, show beyond doubt that the world desires peace and stability in this region.

The heightened sense of global co-operation brought about by the ending of the cold war undoubtedly provides the right atmosphere for a peace process to begin in the Middle East. Yet, unless all the parties to both old and new conflicts in the region demonstrate restraint and a spirit of accommodation, no peace is possible. For, while the rest of the world works with the utmost urgency and commitment to achieve peace in this region, the ultimate decisions and the requisite moves towards peace remain to be made by the regional parties themselves.

We are well aware of the difficulties involved in making those decisions. So much suffering on all sides has been inflicted that each has chosen retaliation as a ready option. The ensuing cycle of violence has bred bitterness and deep mistrust. The massive concentration in the region of both conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction facilitates resort to the use of force even as it fuels aggression and adventurism. Violence, with all its tools, has indeed found a home in the embittered hearts of the Middle East.

Still, reason has elsewhere broken the logic of violence. Arms have been laid down in Central America; President De Klerk and Nelson Mandela have agreed to hold talks in South Africa; the process of peace is proceeding in Cambodia. Surely reason can also prevail in the Middle East, and reason suggests that the will of nearly all humanity must be heeded.

(Mr. Suarez, Philippines)

Almost all the members of the international community are convinced that the best way to achieve a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, is through an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council. We call on Israel and a few others to join in this consensus. To smooth the road to that conference, Israel must also abide by its obligations as a high contracting party to the Fourth Geneva Convention and under relevant United Nations resolutions relative to the protection of the right of Palestinians in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem.

My delegation agrees with the great majority that the terms of the Taif agreements must be respected and given every chance to be implemented. Only through such action can the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the suffering Lebanese nation be regained and that country be freed of all foreign forces.

With regard to a more recent conflict, the Philippines has joined with many other countries in condemning the invasion and annexation of Kuwait by Iraq and has demonstrated its support of those that oppose that aggression by its announcement that it will field a medical-hospital team in the region.

We call on Iraq, to avert the unmitigated disaster of another war, to heed the the international community's demand that it end unconditionally its illegal occupation of Kuwait and abide by all relevant Security Council resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. The world public will not, and cannot, accept anything less.

(Mr. Suarez, Philippines)

Our notable lack of success in achieving that elusive peace in the Middle East is not a disaster for the parties immediately concerned alone. Not one country represented here can hide behind the accident of geographic distance and pretend that all is well in the world so long as one country in a region masses its troops on the doorstep of its neighbour. Not one member of this body can claim immunity, despite the shield of its economic might or the callus of its economic want, from the shock waves of each act of aggression in that region. Not one nation that has accepted the United Nations Charter can be indifferent to the cries of victims of repression or terrorism in those lands, knowing all too well that such cries could in a moment be drowned in the din of yet another war.

Such is the significance of the Middle East that if any Government were to feign indifference to any evolving crisis in the region its own capital's stock market or gas stations could be trusted to spell out the details.

If peace in the Middle East is indivisible, so is peace in this interdependent world.

Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): The post-cold-war world is a new world, indeed, but not in the Middle East. All countries and peoples have realized the significance and the necessity of participating in crystallizing the new concepts, which call for the application of the ideals and principles of the United Nations, with the exception of Israel and the Israeli authorities, which continue to live with the mentality of the last century and behave in the Middle East as if it were a desolate jungle in which Israel can wreak havoc at will. As for the sudden Iraqi invasion of Kuwait - which the United Nations is dealing with as it should be dealt with - we look forward to ending that invasion and eliminating its effects and consequences, according to General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and in consonance with the Charter and international unanimity.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

How can Israel's politicians conduct their affairs in the region like outlaws when they look at themselves and at the world around them? They are but a small group of people, just 3 million strong, in the midst of a vast ocean of hundreds of millions of Arabs and Muslims whom zionism has faced with animosity and hatred. For how long do those ignorant people think that they can go on imposing their will on the region by force? Sooner than they think, the gap which has enabled them to achieve temporary military superiority in the region will be no more. Do they really think that the wheel of time has stopped turning for the Arabs while it turns for them, so that the Israeli authorities can maintain their military and technological superiority over the Arab and Muslim world for ever? Is not this the dream of the ignorant and the hope of the fool in the face of the world of reality?

Israel is aggression. It is aggression against Palestine and the Palestinians, aggression against Lebanon, aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic, aggression against Tunisia, preceded by aggression against Iraq even before the Iraqi régime started its aggression against brother Arabs in Kuwait, raped their country, ransacked their possessions, drew their blood, infringed their honour and threatened the security of its Arab and Muslim brethren, all in the service of the devil.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

Israeli authorities threaten all the Arab and Islamic countries. They have committed and continue to commit crimes against humanity daily in Palestine, in Lebanon, and on the Golan. What sort of mentality is it that lives in the middle ages, while we are on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

Then there is the rejection of every peace initiative and abortion of every attempt to reach at a settlement. There is the trampling of every convention and international commitment, and the violation of every human and moral value and principle. What mental incompetence and inability to understand reality.

This Israeli entity is not on a distant island or in a wide barren desert; it is in the heart of the Middle East, a danger to all those around it. It threatens Syria; it is getting ready to attack Lebanon; it resists the arming of any Arab or Islamic country, and obstructs their scientific, technological and economic progress. It is a fundamental impediment to the development of the region and its advancement in the realms of sciences and the civilization of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

It makes it its right to acquire and amass nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons, and to possess the most modern arsenal of weapons in the region. It makes it its right to attack with its planes and weapons the lands of neighbouring countries, to commit against the Palestinians every crime that breaches human rights. It commits all those crimes against the Palestinian human beings under your eyes, without fear of retribution or accountability.

Then the prime minister of Israel declares that his party considers Israel's borders to extend from the sea to the river. The sea is the Mediterranean, and the river is the Jordan, supposedly, not the Euphrates as claimed by their well-known designs, and only God knows what they are planning. This is how Israel defines its borders as if the Middle East were an open area for them to dismember as they see

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

fit. Is not this sort of thinking and planning the acme of political stupidity? We know, of course, that international law does not recognize a State that has no borders. Defined borders are one of the most important qualifications of a State.

So, what about Israeli borders? Is the Middle East a map made of rubber which Zionist leaders stretch every other way across the region's territories as if there were no other peoples in the region, and as if the rest of the land and States were fair game for oppression?

The huge Jewish immigration to Palestine carries within it great dangers for the region the consequences of which are difficult to foresee. A small country that is hardly large enough for its inhabitants such as Palestine is being overwhelmed by a new population invasion that will cause the demographic situation to explode before long. The results of that explosion will be borne by the Israeli authorities. This immigration is but a barefaced invasion of the Arab lands. We call upon the international community not to assist in facilitating it and to bear its responsibility in any of its stages.

We know the extents of the deception that these groups of emigrating Jews are being subjected to. They are being tempted to come to Palestine where they face, after arrival, serious problems which abound in the Israeli society. Indeed they become part of the problem and bear its consequences. They also become part of the Zionist invasion of the Arab territories and the terroristic Israeli campaign against Arab citizens on their soil and the land of their forefathers.

As the United Nations embarks on a new era and assumes an important role in a new world order that is built on complete adherence to international legality, respect for human rights, and the common international endeavour to establish a world of law and order, the nature of the United Nations responsibilities in relation to the Middle East problem must be compatible with this new international reality.

(Mr. Shihabi, Saudi Arabia)

The United Nations must dedicate its great potential to containing the Middle East problem and directing it towards solution, to curbing the Israeli authorities and forcing them to live in the reality they do not want to see or recognize. The spirit of security and peace and the preservation of the rights which have begun to permeate international relations, should reach the Middle East, and must curb political oppression and political ignorance. We hope it will not be long before we see the Zionist oppression recede, and see justice return to the people in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and all the States of the region.

The intifadah in Palestine, which embodies the aspirations of the Palestinian people, attracts the sympathy and support of the Arab and Muslim nation, as well as the support of every justice-loving person in the world, is a historical phenomenon that should be understood by the rulers of Israel. They must realize that there is no way they can destroy it no matter what they do or to oppose it no matter what injustices they may indulge in, and that it is better for them to return to the peace formulae that have been put forward, for they may have in them the means of solving the problem. We salute the freedom fighters in Palestine, the freedom fighters in Lebanon and the Golan Heights. God Almighty's blessings on the martyrs.

The world will not tolerate for long what Israel is doing. The Arab people will regain their rights no matter how long it may take. The rope of tyranny is short and tenuous no matter how long and strong it may seem. The international community bears a great responsibility to support and safeguard these rights.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.